



## **ARLINGTON REDEVELOPMENT BOARD**

TOWN HALL ARLINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02476

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### **DECISION OF THE BOARD**

#### **EDR DOCKET #3531**

**887 Massachusetts Avenue, Arlington, Massachusetts 02476  
Carowell, LLC**

**Monday, August 7, 2017**

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This Decision applies to the Special Permit application filed by Carowell, LLC for a Special Permit to construct a mixed-use, residential and commercial, structure at 887 Massachusetts Avenue, a 6,196 square foot (sf) lot at the corner of Schouler Court in the B2A Major Business District. Special Permits are needed under Section 5.04 Table of Use Regulations to allow Mixed-Use in the B2A zone, Section 8.07(a) Parking in Commercial Districts, 8.12(c) to allow modification of Parking and Loading Space Standards, and Section 11.06, Environmental Design Review, due to its location on Mass. Ave. The Applicant will demolish an existing vacant building and construct a three-story building consisting of three commercial units on the ground level totaling 2,477 sf, and two, two-bedroom residential units on each of the second and third floor, for a total of four residential units. The parking requirement for the property is six parking spaces—1.5 for each residential unit. Three of the proposed spaces will be for compact cars and the remaining for full-sized cars.

A public hearing was held June 12, 2017 and continued to August 7, 2017.

#### **Materials submitted for consideration of this application:**

Plot Plan, Existing Conditions, Stormwater Plan, Site Plans, Building Plans, and Elevations, dated April 20, 2017

Application for EDR Special Permit with supporting documents, Received May 9, 2017

Environmental Design Review Impact Statement for 887 Mass Ave, Arlington, dated May 9, 2017

Memo from Salem Village Consulting, Re: Stormwater Mitigation Review, dated May 22, 2017

Site Plan, Landscape Plan, Building Plans, and Elevations, dated July 19, 2017

Memo from Robert J. Annese, Atty., Re: Statement of New Facts, dated July 31, 2017

In order to grant this Special Permit, the following criteria must be met.

**Section 10.11a-1** The uses requested are listed in the Table of Use Regulations as a Special Permit in the district for which application is made or is so designated elsewhere in this Bylaw.

Mixed-use is allowed in the B2A district by Special Permit. The Board finds that this condition is met.

**Section 10.11a-2      The requested use is essential or desirable to the public convenience or welfare.**

The property has been vacant and deteriorating for many years. The proposed use will remove an unattractive blighted property marked as a threat to public safety and enclosed with a chain-link metal fence. The commercial uses on the ground floor will complement the other businesses on that block, which include Stop & Shop and Mystic Wine and Spirits. There is one other vacant property on the Mass Ave block, a former garage. The redevelopment of 887 Mass Ave will improve the appearance of the block and may stimulate new development at the site of the vacant garage. The addition of four residential units may add to the customer base for businesses in the area. The building's proximity to Arlington High School and surrounding B2, B4 and R6 zones make this a good location for both residential and commercial uses. The Board finds that this condition is met.

**Section 10.11a-3      The requested use will not create undue traffic congestion, or unduly impair pedestrian safety.**

The use is modest in size, with less than 3,000 sf of commercial space and four residential units, so it will have minimal to no impact on traffic. Six parking spaces (three for compact and three for full-sized vehicles) are provided for the residential units, which should be ample considering the location is in close proximity to mass transit and the Minuteman Bikeway. No parking is required for the commercial space. Commercial customers can be expected to park on the street, as they do for other stores on Mass. Ave. Because the property is on a corner, the Applicant needs a Special Permit to allow one of the parking spaces to be within the front yard facing Schouler Court, which is the less congested street frontage. The entrance is also within 50 feet of the intersection with Mass. Ave. The Board finds that this condition is met.

**Section 10.11a-4      The requested use will not overload any public water, drainage or sewer system or any other municipal system to such an extent that the requested use or any developed use in the immediate area or in any other area of the Town will be unduly subjected to hazards affecting health, safety, or the general welfare.**

The development will result in a reduction of 600 sf of impervious surface, and includes a stormwater recharge system. The Board finds that this condition is met.

**Section 10.11a-5      Any special regulations for the use, set forth in Article 11 are fulfilled.**

The Environmental Design Review standards of Section 11.06 are evaluated below.

**EDR-1 Preservation of Landscape:** The landscape shall be preserved in its natural state insofar as practicable, by minimizing tree and soil removal and any grade changes shall be in keeping with the general appearance of neighboring developed areas.

A landscaping plan is provided. A Cleveland Pear tree will be planted adjacent to the building on Schouler Court and a grass strip buffer will be planted between the front sidewalk and Mass Ave. The buffer will include two street trees to be mutually agreed upon by the Department of Planning and Community Development, the town's Tree Warden, and the property owner. The grass buffer and tree plantings mirror street tree plantings along other sections of Mass Ave. The western lot line of the property is screened from the abutter with arborvitae and rhododendron. The Schouler Court corner includes a small, fenced, landscaped area. The driveway includes a concrete paver apron. The Board finds that this condition is met.

**EDR-2 Relation of the Building to the Environment:** Proposed development shall be related harmoniously to the terrain and to the use, scale and architecture of the existing buildings in the vicinity that have functional or visible relationship to the proposed buildings. The Arlington Redevelopment Board may require a modification in massing so as to reduce the effect of shadows on the abutting property in an R-1 or R-2 district or on public open space.

The site is located on a commercial block. It is also very close to the High School and abuts a commercial building that is proposed to house a spin cycling studio and additional offices and businesses. The proposed building is taller than abutting structures, but because of its corner location will provide a prominent presence, and could be a catalyst for future development and redevelopment. The Board finds that this condition is met.

**EDR-3 Open Space:** All open space (landscaped and usable) shall be so designed as to add to the visual amenities of the vicinity by maximizing its visibility for persons passing by the site or overlooking it from nearby properties. The location and configuration of usable open space shall be so designed as to encourage social interaction, maximize its utility and facilitate maintenance.

The small lot contains landscaping designed to be visible from Mass. Ave. and Schouler Court and for use by building occupants. The lot directly abuts the Arlington High School lawn. The Board finds that this condition is met.

**EDR-4 Circulation:** With respect to vehicular and pedestrian and bicycle circulation, including entrances, ramps, walkways, drives, and parking, special attention shall be given to location and number of access points to the public streets (especially in relation to existing traffic controls and mass transit facilities), width of interior drives and access points, general interior circulation, separation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic, access to community facilities, and arrangement of vehicle parking and bicycle parking areas, including bicycle parking spaces required by Section 8.13 that are safe and convenient and, insofar as practicable, do not detract from the use and enjoyment of proposed buildings and structures and the neighboring properties.

The driveway accessing the parking lot is located on Schouler Court, so as not to interfere with traffic on Mass. Ave., including buses, cars, bikes and pedestrians. An existing curb cut on Mass. Ave. will be abandoned. The sidewalk in front of the building is about 8 feet wide and could provide an area for sidewalk seating. The parking area is constrained. Though bicycle parking is

not required, an outdoor bicycle rack is provided near the entrance to the parking lot. The Board finds that this condition is met.

**EDR-5 Surface Water Drainage:** Special attention shall be given to proper site surface drainage so that removal of surface waters will not adversely affect neighboring properties or the public storm drainage system. Available Best Management Practices for the site should be employed, and include site planning to minimize impervious surface and reduce clearing and re-grading. Best Management Practices may include erosion control and stormwater treatment by means of swales, filters, plantings, roof gardens, native vegetation, and leaching catchbasins. Stormwater should be treated at least minimally on the development site; that which cannot be handled on site shall be removed from all roofs, canopies, paved and pooling areas and carried away in an underground drainage system. Surface water in all paved areas shall be collected in intervals so that it will not obstruct the flow of vehicular or pedestrian traffic and will not create puddles in the paved areas. In accordance with Section 10.11,b, the Board may require from any applicant, after consultation with the Director of Public Works, security satisfactory to the Board to insure the maintenance of all stormwater facilities such as catch basins, leaching catch basins, detention basins, swales, etc. within the site. The Board may use funds provided by such security to conduct maintenance that the applicant fails to do. The Board may adjust in its sole discretion the amount and type of financial security such that it is satisfied that the amount is sufficient to provide for any future maintenance needs.

The existing site is 100% covered by impervious surface. The proposal will result in a reduction in impervious surface of 600 sf. The Applicant has submitted a Stormwater Mitigation Plan providing for subsurface stormwater management. The Plan has been reviewed and approved by the Town Engineer. The Board finds that this condition is met.

**EDR-6 Utilities Service:** Electric, telephone, cable, TV, and other such lines of equipment shall be underground. The proposed method of sanitary sewage disposal and solid waste disposal from all buildings shall be indicated.

The utilities are provided on site, though not underground. A utility/ trash room is provided off of the driveway and attached to the building. The Board finds that this condition is met.

**EDR-7 Advertising Features:** The size, location, design, color, texture, lighting and materials of all permanent signs and outdoor advertising structures or features shall not detract from the use and enjoyment of proposed buildings and structures and the surrounding properties.

An aluminum-panel sign band is incorporated above the first floor storefronts along Mass. Ave. The Board requested an amendment to this building feature as noted in General Condition 1. Individual business signs may be reviewed and approved administratively by the Department of Planning and Community Development. The Board finds that this condition is met.

**EDR-8 Special Features:** Exposed storage areas, exposed machinery installations, service areas, truck loading areas, utility buildings and structures, and similar accessory areas and structures shall be subject to such setbacks, screen plantings or other screening methods as

shall reasonably be required to prevent their being incongruous with the existing or contemplated environment and the surrounding properties.

A utility/ trash room has been incorporated on site adjacent to a bicycle storage room. These rooms are attached to the main building and accessible from the driveway. The Board finds that this condition is met.

**EDR-9 Safety:** With respect to personal safety, all open and enclosed spaces shall be designed to facilitate building evacuation and maximize accessibility by fire, police and other emergency personnel and equipment. Insofar as practicable, all exterior spaces and interior public and semi-public spaces shall be so designed to minimize the fear and probability of personal harm or injury by increasing the potential surveillance by neighboring residents and passersby of any accident or attempted criminal act.

The parking facility and public spaces on site will be well-lit. Redevelopment of this long-vacant property will increase the feeling of safety in the immediate neighborhood. The Board finds that this condition is met.

**EDR-10 Heritage:** With respect to Arlington's heritage, removal or disruption of historic, traditional, or significant uses, structures or architectural elements shall be minimized insofar as practical whether these exist on the site or on adjacent properties.

The existing building and property are not listed on the local or State historic property inventory. The Board finds that this condition is met.

**EDR-11 Microclimate:** With respect to the localized climatic characteristics of a given area, any development which proposes new structures, new hard surface, ground coverage or the installation of machinery which emits heat, vapor or fumes shall endeavor to minimize insofar as practicable, any adverse impacts on light, air and water resources or on noise and temperature levels of the immediate environment.

The reduction of pavement and addition of landscaping will improve the microclimate and reduce the heat island effect. Many of the abutting lots are completely paved, with buildings built right to the lot line. This development will improve upon that condition by providing landscaped setbacks at the corner and on the western edge of the property. The Board finds that this condition is met.

**EDR-12 Sustainable Building and Site Design:** Projects are encouraged to incorporate best practices related to sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, and indoor environmental quality. Applicants must submit a current Green Building Council Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) checklist, appropriate to the type of development, annotated with narrative description that indicates how the LEED performance objectives will be incorporated into the project.

The project location is a sustainable site. It is already developed, close to transit, and will rely on existing utilities and infrastructure. It will employ stormwater management techniques, and



by reducing the paved area, reduce heat island effect. It will provide both water and energy efficiency. The Board can find that this condition is met.

**Section 10.11a-6** The requested use will not impair the integrity or character of the district or adjoining districts, nor be detrimental to the health, morals, or welfare.

Both the commercial and residential uses are appropriate for this location, which has commercial in the immediate area and residential across Mass. Ave. The Board can find that this condition is met.

**Section 10.11a-7** The requested use will not, by its addition to a neighborhood, cause an excess of that particular use that could be detrimental to the character of said neighborhood.

The addition of four, two-bedroom units on this site will help meet the strong demand for housing in Arlington. The commercial spaces will also meet a need for modern commercial space and will complement the surrounding commercial uses. The Board can find that this condition is met.

The following conditions are incorporated into this Special Permit:

**General Conditions**

1. The final sign, exterior material, landscaping, and lighting plans shall be subject to the approval of the Arlington Redevelopment Board or administratively approved by the Department of Planning and Community Development. Any substantial or material deviation during construction from the approved plans and specifications is subject to the written approval of the Arlington Redevelopment Board. The following amendments shall be incorporated into the final plans per recommendations from the August 7, 2017 Redevelopment Board meeting: modifications to the cornice; modifications to the sign band material to better integrate with other building materials; enhancement of door trim around rear entry to residential units; and amendments to the site plan, including adding a bike rack at the west side of the building along Mass Ave., reducing the length of the pavers along the driveway apron, and adding an allowable landscape screening along the driveway.
2. The Board maintains continuing jurisdiction over this permit and may, after a duly advertised public hearing, attach other conditions or modify these conditions as it deems appropriate in order to protect the public interest and welfare.
3. Snow removal from all parts of the site, as well as from any abutting public sidewalks, shall be the responsibility of the owner or occupant and shall be accomplished in accordance with Town Bylaws.
4. Trash shall be picked up only on Monday through Friday between the hours of 7:00 am and 6:00 pm. All exterior trash and storage areas on the property, if any, shall be properly screened and maintained in accordance with Article 30 of Town Bylaws.

5. The Applicant shall provide a statement from the Town Engineer that all proposed utility services have adequate capacity to serve the development.
6. Upon installation of landscaping materials and other site improvements, the Applicant shall remain responsible for such materials and improvement and shall replace and repair as necessary to remain in compliance with the approved site plan.
7. Upon the issuance of the building permit the Applicant shall file with the Building Inspector and the Department of Community Safety the names and telephone numbers of contact personnel who may be reached 24 hours each day during the construction period.